

The SL Arts and Life Magazine

Kez

a p r i l

2014

AMForte

an interview with Jami Mills

The Artefact

by Art Blue

The Key to Golden Hills

by Stihly Augenblick/Hitomi Tamatzui

by Stihly Augenblick/Hitomi Tamatzui

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's hand on the neck of a guitar. The guitar's neck is covered in a glowing pink and purple grid pattern, likely representing a fretboard diagram. The person's fingers are positioned on the strings, suggesting they are playing a chord or a specific note. The background is dark, making the glowing grid stand out.

VOYAGE TO SL BY HARRY BAILEY

Silly Babbit with Gudman Gausman

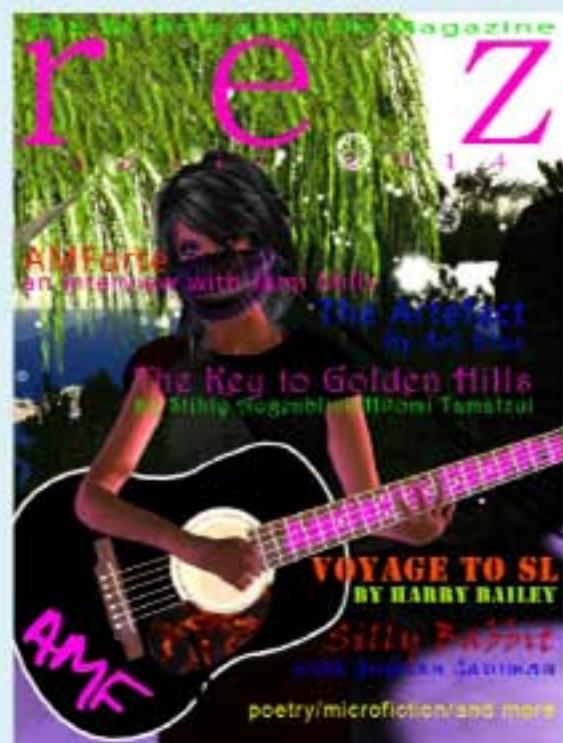
poetry/microfiction/and more

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- **Silence in the Night** Our gifted regular contributor, Luna Branwen, presents a stunning, heartfelt poem.
- **The Key to Golden Hills: Jing-Wei** This is the third chapter in the noir classic by Stihly Augenblick and Hitomi Tamatzui, who combine spectacular words and images.
- **Mozart** The works of the master composer heard through the ears of our own demented Crap Mariner.
- **Silly Babbit** Gudrun Gausman tells us a thing or two (or 50,000) about the Easter Bunny and his happy helpers.
- **I Know** our newest contributor to rez, Zymony Guyat, challenges our perceptions of wealth, politics and justice.
- **Voyage to the Center of Second Life** Exploring SL from the eyes of a noob, The Perfect Gentleman, Harry Bailey, takes us back to our humble avatar beginnings.

About the Cover:

Jami Mills captures singer AMForte in concert, captivating her listeners with a mix of covers and her own soulful originals. AMForte opens up to Jami about her roots, her joys and her hopes for the future. Catch her if you can if she's performing in a venue near you.





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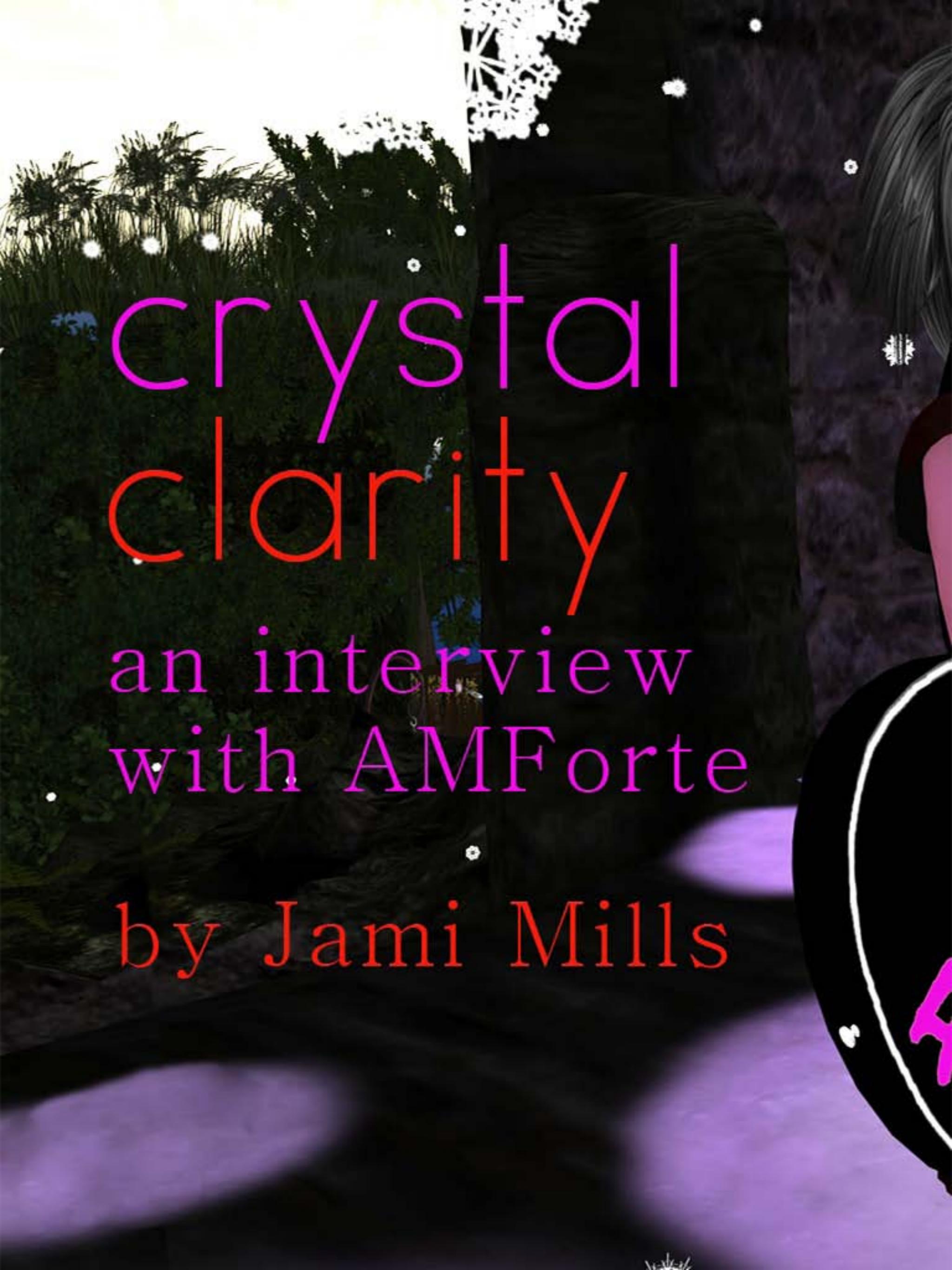
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'I ROBOT





crystal clarity

an interview
with AMForte

by Jami Mills



If you love visiting live music venues in SL as I do, chances are you've come across AMForte. A fixture in the music scene here, AMForte has been delighting SL audiences for years, playing with all the greats at one time or another. Her distinctive voice, backed by sensitive acoustic guitar work, lends itself perfectly to SL's intimate concert settings.

AMForte is not one of those up and coming SL artists that we like to introduce to our readers -- she's a seasoned veteran of the music culture here, and that certainly shows in her performances. Few singers connect so well with their audience, and even fewer have so vast a repertoire of covers and originals. I guess that's why she has such a large and devoted following. If it's an enchanting afternoon or evening of musical entertainment you're seeking, an AMForte concert is about as close to a "sure thing" as there is.

Last December, when one of SL's favorite singer/songwriters, Quantamis Navarathna, unexpectedly passed away, the call went out to SL's live music community to join their voices in a memorial to honor him, and AM was one of the first to answer that call. One after another, for the entire day, singers paid tribute to Quan, and I was fortunate enough to be there at just the right time -- when AM stepped up to the microphone.

AM's music is always heartfelt. She sings from the heart and plays from the heart. But it was on that poignant afternoon that I really "heard" AM for the first time -- heard the way she bared her emotions for all to experience, the way she exposed her vulnerability as only true artists are able.

One of our missions here at rez is to connect our readers with the best talent and the most outspoken voices in our world, whether they're installation artists, builders, fractal artists, political activists, poets, particle artists, what have you. In the world of live music, however, AMForte stands out as a communicator, a provocateur of sorts, a staunch defender of the faith, love, life, happiness and, yes, heartbreak. Wrap it together and you have one of SL's most enchanting artists and a true "entertainer."

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JM: Thank you, AM, for taking time out of your busy schedule to join me today to talk about your music, its roots, and how you see yourself fitting into the musical firmament. On your website, you say "Life = Emotions + Passion = Songs," and you seem to live by those words. The term "soulful" gets bandied about a little too much, I think, but in your case, it's very descriptive of your singing. When you perform, you don't hold back, do you?

AM: I don't hold back at all. I live life through the songs that I sing. The past emotions come through and I feel the pain, the hurt, the love and even the destruction of each song that I sing.

JM: *You grew up on North Carolina (where the 'cue has that righteous tang of vinegar). What were your formative experiences? When was the time you "knew" you wanted to be a singer/songwriter?*

AM: I was a little girl when I knew that I wanted to sing. I used to sing songs with my parents and sing to Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey, amongst other really great artists.

JM: *And now to your musical roots. Which musicians had the greatest influence on your style?*

AM: There have been a lot of different musicians/artists who have influenced me in my lifetime from Alanis Morrisette to Radiohead, and those are just a couple of artists that have made an impact on my music.

JM: *I saw in your blog that if you could sing a duet with any other singer, it would be Thom Yorke. Was Radiohead such an influence?*

AM: Oh yes! Thom Yorke lives, breathes music. You can see it when he performs. He is an amazing artist with

the rest of his crew. They inspire me.

JM: *You've performed extensively in SL (the great SL club Two Moon Paradise seems to be a favorite venue), but you've also performed quite a bit in RL as well. How would you describe the differences in performing in each medium and how has SL helped you develop as a performer?*

AM: There is a big difference between performing in real life compared to second life. In SL you come across many individuals from all over the world, and right in the comfort of your very own home. It's really nice to be able to find gigs and not have to drive at all to get to them. Real life itself is very different because you play in front of people and it's more frightening. Playing in front of people is a different kind of high, the adrenaline is pumping and is somewhat nerve-wracking. I have a bit of stage fright, but when I play in SL, I don't. It's just a different feeling I get.

JM: *Though so many other singers struggle with it, one thing I've noticed about your SL performances is that you always sing in tune. It must be challenging, given the constraints you're under when performing in SL. How hard is it to get a good sound in SL and can you always hear yourself well enough to know?*

AM: Staying in tune for me is very easy because I use a headset so I can hear myself very clearly. I think you have to as an artist. Especially playing live, you have to be able to hear yourself sing or it will become disastrous.

JM: You've worked with just about every artist in SL at one time or another. Have you ever done any dual-streaming and, if so, with which artists? If not, is that something you'd ever consider doing, and who would you most like to team up with?

AM: I absolutely love dual streaming! I have dual streamed with Max, Starfish, Sassy, Gabryel, Raspberry, Amereth! I know there may be others but it's been so long since I dual streamed I tend to forget! I hope I didn't miss anyone. In the future, I would like to

JM: At a recent concert, you said you weren't going to be inworld in SL very much in the future. I get the sense that you sometimes go on hiatus from SL. Is that because of your RL touring or for other reasons?

AM: I enjoy performing in SL because you become so close with fans and friends. You get to know one another as real people and not think of it as just a game. They are real people, and I have learned to love each and every one of them. I am hoping that my RL tour will happen. Right now it's kinda up in the

air and hopefully, if not this time around, I'll be planning another one very soon.

JM: One of your signature looks is a stylish mask you sometimes wear over your face when you perform. Tell me the story behind wearing such a mask.

AM: It's simple. I am a Ninja.

JM: You are a big believer in giving back to your community, whether in SL or otherwise, and you've always shown a willingness to pitch in for charity. Back in 2012, you, along with dozens of other SL musicians and singers, recorded "A Very Merry Christmas" (your tracks were "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" and one of my favorite carols, "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen") and donated all the proceeds to the American Cancer Society as part of its Relay for Life. Who organized that compilation, and how was it put together?

AM: If I recall correctly, Liz Harley was involved in this charity and was one of the people who organized and put it together. Other than donating the tracks, I wasn't involved in putting it together.

JM: And last December, you and another dozen or so singers put on a three-day live show called "Slumrock 2013," benefiting the National Fibromyalgia Research Association. You always seem to be there to contribute your talent. How



It's simple. I am a Ninja.

do you view an artist's responsibility to use her gift to help others?

AM: Giving is one of the things my parents taught me. It's important for an artist to contribute. It's unfortunate that we as artists cannot always donate our time, as some of us are struggling ourselves. I am sure artists give what they can, when they can.

JM: One example of your generosity is worth mentioning here, because it's what prompted this article. Just before last Christmas, we all lost a very good friend and incredible talent, Quantamis Navarathna. You, along with countless other SL artists, appeared at a memorial in his honor. I remember your heartfelt words about not knowing him well, but how you wanted to add your voice to those celebrating his memory. And then you brought the house down with your version of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah." You touched me and everyone else there so deeply that afternoon with your choice of material and the passion with which you sang it, and I knew then and there that this article needed to be written.

AM: You are correct. I did not know him well, but what I did know about him was, he was an amazing person. Kind hearted and loved by many. When you come across someone like that, you want to keep them in your life because they are valuable.

JM: You crowd-sourced your own bookings for a tour last year, asking for your fans' help in booking an Eastern tour. How did that work out? Were people responsive to your outreach?

AM: I did receive a good response from some of my fans saying they would assist me with finding me some gigs in their city. It's nice to know that people are willing to help you in any way they can.

Giving is one of my parents

JM: You are a bundle of energy. You've learned about the marketing power of the internet. You have a line of accessories (I saw a kewl bag you're selling that I really want), you perform tirelessly, you graduated from school last spring, you're writing a novel, and you're starting a tour in April up the East Coast, from North Carolina to Virginia, and then you keep on going up to Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. I'm out of breath just thinking about it. You're a very high achiever. Have you always had this kind of drive? Did this come from your upbringing or more from wanting to prove yourself?

AM: After almost dying in 2007 by a massive pulmonary embolism, it was as if I woke up and actually started living in the first time in my life. Grass seemed greener, the sky seemed bluer and I think I looked at this Earth differently for the first time in my life. It was as if I was asleep all those years up until that point. I knew that life was too short and I wanted to start pursuing everything that I could.

of the things taught me.

JM: In August of last year, you announced that you had signed with BlueTint Records (who also has Shawn Tracy and Jon Crocker on its roster). Tell us something about how that's changed things up for you, and what we can expect from BlueTint in the future.

AM: I am expecting things to start moving along in my career. Even though things may be moving slowly at first, I believe in BlueTint record, and believe that only good things will come from this and can't wait to make them proud!

JM: There are several of your originals now available on ReverbNation

(<http://www.reverbnation.com/amforte>) for listening or buying. In "Nothing Concrete" and "Are You Happy Now," you're backed by some pretty high-energy electric guitar work. Who was backing you on those tracks and how much fun did you have in the studio recording them?

AM: I had so much fun with the studio musicians! It was great putting the songs together. It was a little hard at first because they didn't know exactly what direction I wanted to go in. I gave them an idea and they ran with it. That is why a couple of the songs are more hardcore than the others. It sounds raw but I believe to be a great mixture of songs.

JM: In other originals, such as "With You and Me" (my personal favorite), "Please," and "Games," you return to your familiar acoustic style. You seem equally comfortable in both the electric/acoustic genres. Tell me how those two distinctive styles match your own singing style.

AM: I don't like to be categorized in a specific genre. I like to create music and when I create music I don't look for a genre, I just lay back with my guitar and play music until I feel the music come alive. That may not make sense to some, but for me, it's how I write.

For our readers, you should know that AM has quite a few newer songs posted





on *YouTube*, and it may be one of the best places to hear her because you also get to see how much she throws herself into her songs.

JM: Do you intend to keep posting new material on YouTube?

*AM: I will start posting more material on *YouTube* as soon as I get some free time.*

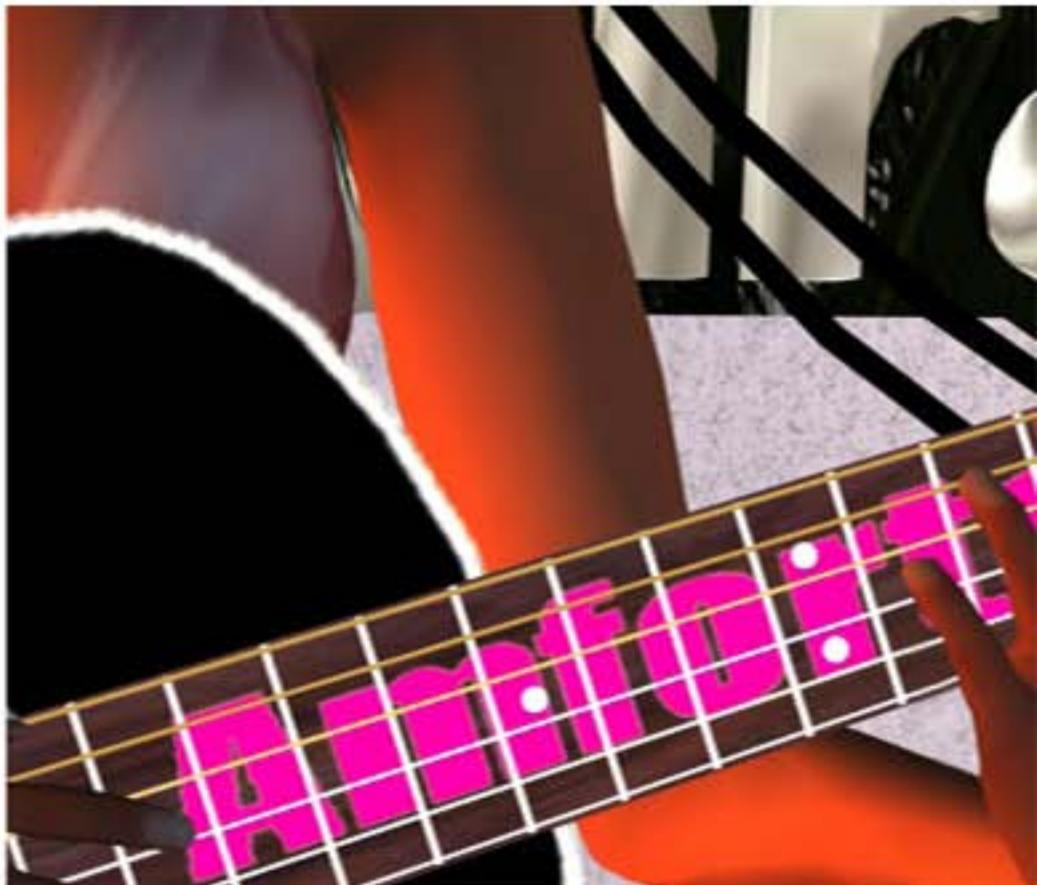
JM: You immerse yourself in your material so completely, one almost forgets you're singing... rather, you simply seem to be injecting pure emotion directly into your listeners' veins. One particularly haunting example is your version of Lifehouse's "Storm." (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF9u-Dp9VGwe&list=UUw5uy_BHS-JpVpzs3k2pNvxg)

All I can say is it's one of your most beautifully rendered songs. It's so beautifully written and a song so perfectly matched with your voice and delivery. I've added the link to this song, because if there's one song I'd love for people to hear you interpret, it's "Storm."

You cover a couple of Alanis Morisset songs ("Uninvited" (a capella) and "Ironic" are superb too). People often comment on the similarities in your singing styles. And you channel Dolores O'Riordan (from the Cranberries) beautifully. Are they among those artists who

are particularly meaningful to you - touchstones, if you will - or do you just have fun singing their songs?

AM: I....LOVE...THE....CRANBERRIES! An amazing band and, wow, yes! They have inspired me a lot. I love their music and it's great to see artists that you adore grow and get better and better at what they do that it inspires you to create music.



JM: You have been very open about the fact that you were in an abusive relationship, and how your music helped you get through the toughest times.

AM: I am open about this because I want others to know that they are NOT alone. I have been there, I know what it's like and it ain't pretty. If I can get out of it and survive it, then anyone

can. I know it's hard, but you have to do it because you're worth it!

JM: I love your quote in your blog, "Whatever doesn't kill you only makes you stronger, but HELL, I don't want to be any stronger!!!" Please describe how your music helped heal you, and for those of our readers who also find themselves in abusive relationships, please offer some insights about what worked for you.



AM: Writing music has helped me in more ways than one. It has been an outlet when I wanted a way out, when I didn't know where else to turn. Writing songs and reliving the past through my music helps me because it reminds me where I once was in my life and where I am now. How my life has changed throughout the years and how

I am strong. When I'm down and out, I write...or I listen to music or I create. It's a great outlet.

JM: Our readers are interested in all things tech, so please share with us the technical side of your SL performances, starting with what guitar(s) you play, all the way through your mics, pickups, amps, and any auxiliary equipment you like to use. Please don't hold back on the models, equalization, amperage, etc. Let your inner geek come out.

AM: I don't know a lot about equipment but what I do know is I play a D-15 Martin which I absolutely love. It has a very warm but rich sound that can sometimes be very haunting. I have a multi mixer and a Shure beta mic which I love, but thinking of purchasing better equipment in the future.

Well, I don't know a lot about equipment either, AM, but I do know this: when you strum that equipment and pour your heart into that equipment, it sounds like a little bit of heaven. Thank you for putting all those smiles on our faces and the occasional tear in our eye. It's performers like you that make us keep coming back....again and again.

• r — e — z •

AFTER DARK

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The I Am I Am

It is done! My Alzheimer's is encapsulated. Prof. Sol is a dab hand. I celebrate triumphs. "The Greatest Digital Artist of All Time" was the headline in the Universal Gazette, with the subtitle, "Dead or Alive, Doesn't Matter – With Alzheimer's, First Prim is Shooting Star."

To be able to afford a First Prim, you have to be a millionaire. My agent takes all the money, as I have debts. But this I don't tell anyone.

Artefact in Substance in Art by Art Blue



in 3D



SIM Claressa - 2-1/2 Mile Gallery

I planned my retrospective by myself and supervised the replica of the longest gallery in the world, the 2-½ mile gallery once created on the land Claressa. It was a piece of cake, as everything was conserved in Bremer Kunsthalle. Only the data format was a bit rusty. But rust is part of my business.

This I noticed as I had some problems in the clinic with my eyes and could only see everything in shades of grey, even using an enhancer, camouflaged as glasses. Why should my guests have it better than I? By no means have I always been into minimalism, so let them follow me back in time to black and white. But I need to move further. I need to face the question of existence. Doing this shall make me immortal. I expect nothing less. I deserve nothing less.

I will let them move back in time, where seconds or even minutes determine whether to buy or not to buy an artwork. There was a time you could buy an avatar for use like a puppet. "To be or not to be." You know this quote? No? Long ago, there have been such questions in the simulator. Ways to breathe life into carbon entities have still been academic. "I think, therefore I am" – does this ring a bell? Also no? But surely you know the famous one, "I shop, therefore I am."

What to do now with all the endless time in the simulator as we are running on femtospeed? No wonder death ceremonies are all the rage. All faked, of course. All that shopping doesn't make one happy. To be able to afford to eat at the best places sounds great but brings no image reward or attraction when you can buy a pill and you're back as slim as before. All the compliments on your flat belly don't really count. More and more see it. After *Burning Man*, burning art, now burning artefacts? Changes are needed and I'm the one to make them happen, for I am First Prim.

I miss the talks on what the artist had in mind, could have had in mind, might have felt or not felt when working on a picture, a screenshot, an installation. A red dot is no longer placed next to a work to show that it has been bought, might be bought, or stays reserved until the end of the exhibition. Finally the payment question. Will there be black money under the table? Of course, you know that the A-system "trust in Art A coin" did not exist in the early days. There have been Lindens, but this coin got worthless. With a simple hack, you can generate as many Lindens as you like, or program a box to take all the Lindens from others. You don't believe me? It's hard to do, but it comes ever harder. There was no guarantee that one gets an original artwork - just a copy that looks similar. Of

course, we talk of all kinds of digital art, even when it's called "oil on canvas." Worlds long gone, but still the memory counts even in us, as we live in hypergrid networks.

I left Alzheimer's behind as the first and only one facing this deadly disease and got reborn. This is my chance. I will stay famous. Famous forever. I can set the rules. My work, my rules. I will use this chance of a lifetime to let the audience learn that art has substance.

mélange comes to my mind. I remember the time I was the scribe of Emperor Shaddam IV. It's easy for me to quote from the books of Arrakis: "In this time, the most precious substance in the universe is the spice melange. The spice extends life. The spice expands consciousness. The spice is vital to space travel."

I'll set the central timer of this world on millisecond intervals. You shake your heads. That's impossible. The pro-

But I need to move further. I need to face the question of existence. Doing this shall make me immortal.

But how I can work something out so it will be remembered over time? Not just a grand opening, a show and then the audience moves on to another chapter.

I know what is needed. You need to suffer to feel substance. Suffering it is. On what will avatars suffer the most? I can feel the solution moving up to me, to my old bones.

I will ... bend time. I will put everything in slow motion. The spice

cessor cycles are usually on femto, and even some Big Blues are on attospeed.

You're right. You can't do this within a world and keep integrity in the system. You have to leave it. But when you come back, aging becomes the problem. Generations have passed. You'll not be able to go on with the changes. Compare it with a Neanderthal entering an airplane and hearing the steward say, "Fasten your seatbelts."

So how do you do it? I won't tell you

now. I'll show you the time machine that Aley made. An artefact. A true one. I'm proud to have it in my collection "for use in all worlds." This is the way of art. I make as many copies as needed and use this machine to let the audience travel in time. Of course, I fake the travel. But it shall be such a good fake that even I believe.

I give them a pill to extend consciousness. A placebo will do it. I color it red for women and blue for men. Or shall I swap the colors? Hmm ... and for cats? Maybe I choose unisex. Then I let a delay routine run inside the placebo when it comes to the show. I produce lag. Brutal, hard, strong lag. Lag you people won't believe. I'll place a board in their hands to press keys, call it *artXploder*. WASD keyboard settings come out of the past into my mind. W=forward, A=left turn ... and so on. Maybe I'll even allow them to fly through the gallery with some arrow-keys or Page-Up and Page-Down, but of course the result happens in slow motion. And if one presses a key five times in a row to move faster, I'll reward this in the good old ways, and let this avi just bump on a wall after letting it shortly pass through it. I can tease them on top and define some crazy weird combinations to zoom like CRTL-ALT-SHIFT, or let them roll their fingers on a ball for steering.

All this is for a reason. I need to erase

all pride in them. I need to read Dante again to tune myself into this project. I'll exhibit *The Seven Sins* at the entrance, made by *ChapTer*, an artist coming from the grid Metropolis. And suddenly, I clearly saw the concept in my mind, as my agent came by for small talk. "A grand opening is a dating event," he says. "Your art is just a sort of grave furniture." My revenge shall be dreadful.

For getting a visitor's ticket for the grand opening, I call "I in ND – it's payday." An avatar has to come just as "an Eye." How all the ladies will protest! No dresses, no make-up, no hair by *EMO-tions*, no nails by *Moondance Boutique*, no eyelashes by *Amacci*, and most fatal: no shoes! *The Eye* design I found in *Vulcanicus*, a time capsule for digital art. Nanjido Oh gave this away as a freebie. Let's see if anyone remembers ...

So I fibbed with this design and sent out a link by Fixing the Facts: publishing date of *The Eye* is 18.02.1990 in wordpress. Showing such old credits never happened before. The bloggers gasped: "Before the first simulator existed, First Prim made an Eye avatar in 3-D? Impossible! He must be using the time machine for the show! We expect artefacts! We travel back in time! It's payday! Thanks to Alzheimer's." Everyone wants to come.

My agent found a quote by Navah Dreams, creator of *Dreamt Forest*, so another time stamp underlines the story.

“Insane, but true art,” said Navah Dreams, 3D-artist and actor in European Passages: Inferno. “We worked so hard to bring Avatars to life and now you kill them.” “No,” I said. “I skip them for awhile and let *The Eye* take place. The reception of the art we make shall not be distracted.”

The Eye substance comes back into art, into Avatarart. No longer do skin, shape, hair and dress make the deal. The substance of the work counts. Well, this is the message of *The Blue Elephant*, written by Sergius Both long, long time ago.

You don't know the story? It's written in an old long forgotten language, as all the languages out of the codes are gone. Some of you may have the license to translate, but it is expensive, since *Google* bought the rights to use languages that aren't native coded in the simulator. Just to print the very first lines is allowed in case it's a matter of historic research. So, I call it research -- and not the theft of the idea.

• r — e — z •



The Blue Elephant
Sergius Both (1997)

A jury meets, it awards a computer graphics prize, but then there are still objections.

Ladies and Gentlemen. What you see now is the prize winning work. Carry Eisfeldt was stunned. This concoction should be the best picture. For this purpose, a panel of experts had met three days, experts of international standing, and now this! Carry knew some of the artists who participated, and there were some great ones among them – of course not to forget himself.

But suddenly someone approaches him and pats him on the back and shakes his hand. "So, you're the lucky one! A great piece of art." A group of people applauds. In the middle of it all, Carry Eisfeldt didn't know what hit him.

For all who are unable to decipher the graphic codes: buy a ticket to get an invitation from my agent, Neo Gurgelwasser, or get the next issue of rez to see *The Blue Elephant*.



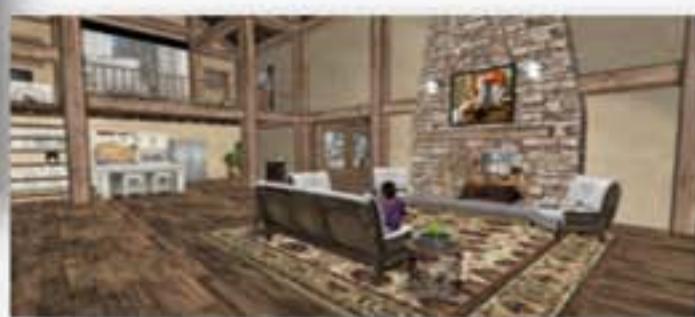
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Moondance Boutique
Model: Warrenoir Ceresi

Earth Hour Exclusive
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moondance boutique



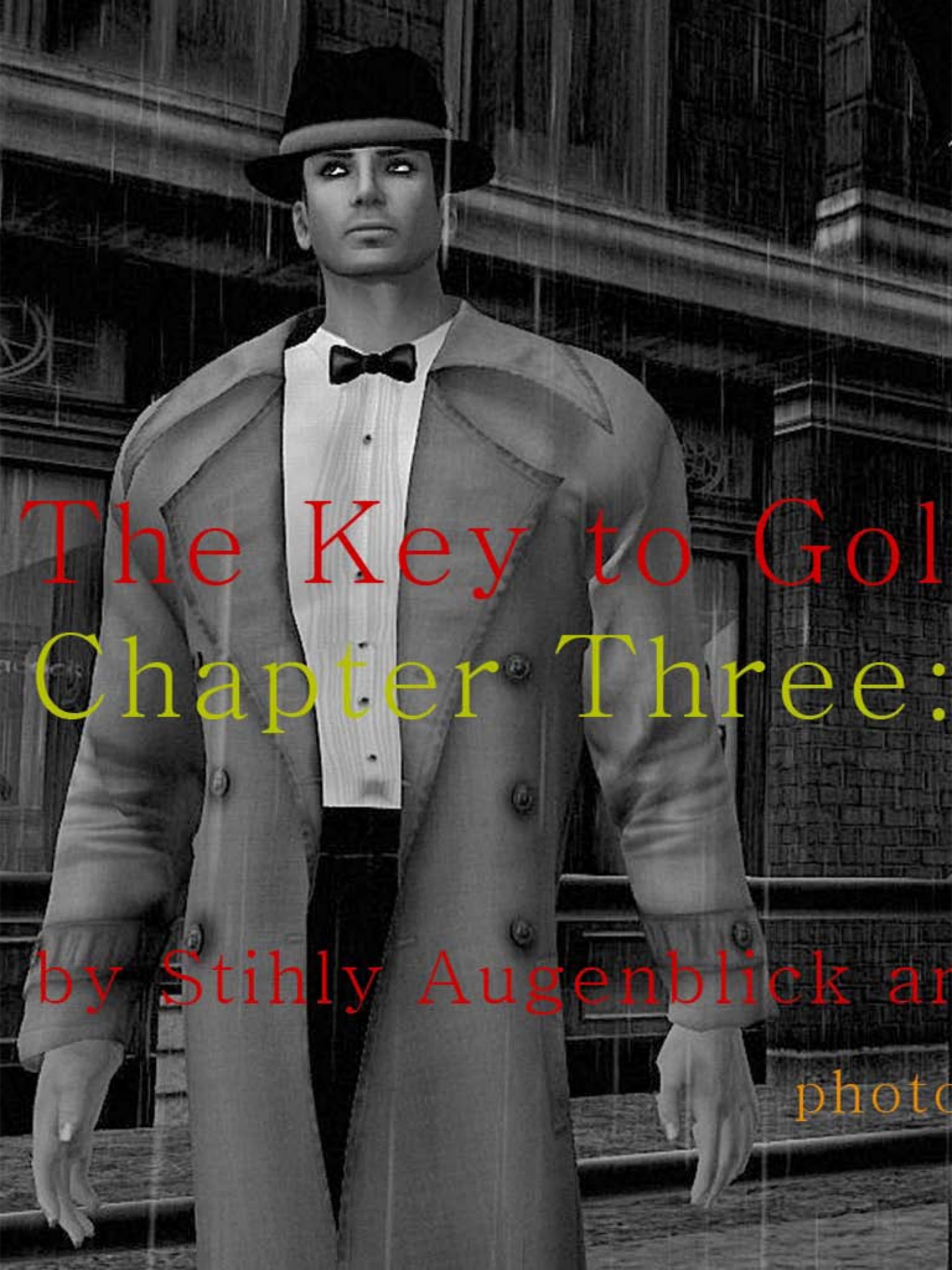
Standing on shaky ground seems to be the way I found
listening now while the quiet settles round, soft hums electrical,
soft hums mechanical, it's two a.m. the quiet is "quiet"
the night is long and slow, and the breathing, the breathing
is all around me, its emblematic relevance to all that lives,
its determination to get and hold my attention...

I kiss my cat all over her head and ears, and feel her breathing
little self, her heart beats where I hold her and her purr rustles
the night with a "prrrrrrrrr" whirring and a sweet twirling
sounds settle down gently all around us, the silence deepens
but now she runs across the floor, her little feet a patterning
of far too much sound for all this silence.

ence in the Night

by Luna Branwen





The Key to Gol Chapter Three:

by Stihly Augenblick an

photo



den Hills

Jing-Wei

and Hitomi Tamazui

Photography by Hitomi Tamatzui

The morning sun's rays struggled to filter through the sooty window, through the falling rain.



Another day arrived. I didn't have to open my eyes before I felt the need to sigh. Again. I could see the ugly wallpaper pattern in my mind before I confirmed it with my eyes. Here I was again in this room with its ugly English style. If only I could turn over and return to my dreams. Hong Kong is where I wished I were. When I was little, mother would wake me up and get breakfast ready. I felt a smile forming on my lips. That was a happy time. I would play with my sisters, mother, and father and then go to school and see all my friends.



I looked around, but Phil wasn't on the bed anymore. He was sitting in the chair watching me. As I headed to the bathroom I asked him, "Did you get what you needed?" "Yea," he grunted, "a whole lot more."

I came out of the bathroom with bandages and started tending to his "scratches." "How did you do this to yourself?" I asked. "You told me only a quick meet. Is this how you do your business?"



Little did I know who he had met and how many. "It's a different kind of business from looking over some dusty accounting

books, honey", he said in a dismissive tone. I regarded him with 'perfect almond eyes' as he'd called them, and although battered, his appearance moved something in me, something long dormant. I dismissed the feeling. "Right," I tossed back to him.

As I washed and bandaged him, he leaned his head back. I looked at him. "Tell me what you're thinking, Phil."

As his eyes closed he started to recall our brief time together. It seemed almost as if he had to review our whole time together to make sense of what was happening now.



"It was an accident, actually, I was looking for your business to do a background check and happened to see you out of the corner of my eye," he told me. "You walked out of the hotel, raised an umbrella, and walked across

the street. 'Wasn't that the girl from the shoot out?' "At first, I thought I was losing it and tried to forget that crazy idea. Then I found out that you were the owner of the business I was sent to check."

Phil recalled our first meeting at a local coffee shop. Since Angie's death he had avoided all coffee shops.



Too many memories too painful, he confessed. He didn't want to be there, but it was my choice, not his. I didn't know he was questioning in his mind whether I was the one from the theater. I really had no idea what Phil was thinking about that night, who he really was, or what he was after. Then he told me when he saw the tattoos on my arms an alarm went off for him. He knew I had to be that woman from the theater. But he decided to hold that information close. If he was right, I would know who killed Angie. Some-

how, he was going to make me lead him to them.



I had let him check out my business. Books, stock, money flow, etc.; it was legit and all in good order. Not a greatly profitable business, but on the up and up.



He looked over the warehouse. He deferred giving me his opinion about my business, but decided to okay me to his client, after a little more double-checking. He needed that fee. He told me bluntly there wasn't much business for

an 'angry, washed up' detective. Having an excuse to hang around meant he could investigate the shootout further. He told me what he was still thinking; "was the Triad involved here?" The books didn't show it. But that didn't mean anything to him. Anyone could cook up a duplicate set of books. Was I a front for them? He confessed it was hard for him to believe that notion. After all, the last time he saw who he thought was me, I was shooting at the Triad, not fronting for them.

But then he told me his father had always said, "Politics makes strange bedfellows." He couldn't be sure. "I don't blame you for thinking that, Phil. Let me look at that other arm."



He then recounted how we had gone out for dinner and some small talk, after a long day poring over dusty books and invoices.

He talked about how we had met every



day since that dinner. He said he sensed that I had begun to like him. He found himself coming up with one excuse after another to meet with me and, to be honest, it always seemed I made time for him. His suspicions eased and he admitted to enjoying time with me. I was always adept at conversation, not one of his skills. He recounted, smiling, that I was strikingly beautiful, with 'gorgeous almond-shaped amber eyes', 'pretty black hair', with curves in 'all the right places.' Still, along with my beauty came a sadness he could feel, except when I showed 'that gorgeous smile.' He thought he might have a knack for bringing out that smile. He said he wasn't sure why, but when I smiled, it lifted his own sadness. He often wondered about the story behind my sadness. I wondered the same thing, as he was talking to me right now.

He said he softened further as he began to look forward to my company. I would move closer when we sat and he didn't object. He could smell my perfume; A magic potion that dazzled his

brain. "You're something else, Jing-Wei. A guy could lose himself in you."



I smiled shyly as he said that. "What happened next, Phil?"

He said he couldn't remember who suggested it, but somehow we ended up dancing. We'd made an odd couple, the towering, brutish, Caucasian and the slight, tattooed, Asian



lady. He knew his dancing was laughable, but when I laughed kindly at his bumbling, it lifted his heart. 'You reminded me of someone I used to know.' Phil didn't elaborate; I didn't ask. He smiled when he said he didn't mind the lessons, being guided by my gentle hand on his back, his arm, or his hips. Soon we were a head-turning pair. He smiled, "even an elephant can learn to dance with a mouse."



Our eyes met as he reminisced on that moment and for the briefest of instants, our fears fell away, replaced by a feeling of warmth.

A car backfired outside and the fears rushed back. "What else, Phil?"

On the third night, after again allowing



fun to take over the investigation, but wearying of small talk, Phil had brought me home. We sat close together; almost face to face, lips to lips, hips to hips. Even as he was drawn closer to me, he said he couldn't shake the conflict between the duplicitous Triad concubine he thought he was chasing and the beautiful, sad lady in front of him.

He stood up abruptly, as if he had been jolted with electricity, and asked the question that was burning in his mind all evening, yet which I expected from the first: "Is this a Triad operation?" His voice was no longer gentle and

soothing, but suddenly blunt, direct, and rough; a cop's voice, as he was hoping to shock me into honesty.

he had spoken to me brought back painful memories of how my Triad "warlord" had abused me. My eyes



I easily recalled that moment. I remembered being taken aback, less by the question than by his suddenly brusque manner. For a second, the way

opened wide and then closed as I came to an understanding. "It's the tattoos," I murmured. "I almost forgot about them."



"So you are one of them!" he stated, his voice deepening into the intimidating "don't you dare lie to me" tone he used on petty criminals and street snitches. It left little doubt that lying was a painful choice, best avoided. He saw me wince again as he spoke and, strangely, he said his heart sank.

Phil's eyes closed as he told me he hated to talk to me that way, but he was just "so desperate" to know the truth. I had finally whispered, as the tears of those memories flooded back, "No. I escaped from them a few years ago. I wanted to get away from their clutches and be human again." I resumed cleaning his bruised body as I shook my head. "Go on, Phil. It's O.K., really." He continued.

Something inside him was softened by his memories of me at that time, the sadness and defeated manner; so unlike the businesswoman he interviewed before.

A tender feeling fought to emerge during his interrogation, but his years as a skeptical detective kicked at him. "No, you'll have to prove it to me that this is an up and up business." He tried to be gentler this time after seeing my tears, but he had to know the truth.

I knew then, as I know now, that he bore no grudge towards me; he was desperate and tortured. His desire was

never to hurt or humiliate me; he was nothing at all like my warlord.

Phil told me he was torn. He'd promised his client a quick answer - - to stick around could mean days, weeks before any Triad members showed their ugly mugs. But looking at me, he thought maybe I was right. He would just stay a while and investigate some more, see what he could turn up.

Phil also told me that long ago he had decided that since he was no longer a cop, he didn't have to follow all the rules. He then admitted he had decided to visit my office alone, to do some peeking by myself. "Sorry about that, Jing-Wei."





copy, that's all." He nodded and went on with his recollection.

"I found no difference. No hidden money; no secret stashes. A duplicate set that was truly a duplicate. I started putting them back, when a key fell from the bottom of the drawer above.



I nodded "Keep going. I figured you would, and you did what you thought you had to."

"All I found were paper, pens, pencils, and your other set of books. I looked them over, but couldn't find anything new, so I carefully replaced them, wondering about the duplicate books."

"Phil, those were in case I needed a

'What's this?' I wondered, turning it over in my hand. 'Looks like a locker key, but not from this town.' Searching further, I found nothing else. But instead of putting it back, I pocketed the key."

The next morning, he'd packed.

• r — e — z •



mozart by crap mariner

Some scientists say that if you expose a baby to Mozart, it will boost its IQ.

Other scientists say that this has no effect on a baby's IQ.

No matter what the scientist say, everyone agrees that exposing Mozart to babies really pissed him off.

"Vat's mit all zees kinders!" he'd shout, sticking his fingers in his ears and scowling at the room full of babies. "Vere ist mein harpsichord?"

Then the babies would scream louder, and Mozart became even more irritable and outraged.

Further research is necessary on The Mozart Effect. And self-changing diapers to stop babies from screaming.

photography
jami mills





Silly Ba

by Gudrun G.



abbit
ausman

What's Your Issue?

a monthly advice column by
Gudrun Gausman

Dear Gudrun -

I am the youngest of 14 children, and when I was four years old, we went to my grandparents' house for Easter Sunday, where the Easter Bunny was supposed to have left our Easter baskets. Of course, the older kids knew there was no Easter Bunny, but I had no idea. When we got there, my oldest siblings took my Easter basket and hid it. When everyone went to grab their Easter baskets and mine was missing, my brother told me the Easter Bunny hated me. I cried until my parents made my siblings return my basket.

Because of this horrendous cruelty, I was permanently scarred. As a result, I have always been afraid of bunnies. And I have wondered about exactly what was the connection between bunnies and eggs, and Easter. And, for that matter, chicks, ducks, or whatever, and Easter.

Wondering,

Hosta Babbitt

Dear Hosta,

Well, if you eliminate the obvious metaphors for fertility and rebirth, the answer is **NONE**. But given those metaphors, their relationship to the Resurrection and rebirth is clear, and they serve to enhance the allegory of birth, life, and life after death.

We all know that eggs are the perfect food. But how did the ancients store eggs over the winter? Chickens normally respond to daylight by laying eggs. More daylight, more eggs. Less daylight, fewer eggs. So, over the winter months, it was good to have a supply laid in (pardon the pun).

You can, of course, pickle eggs, but you're not going to be able to eat those sunny-side up. There are two ways to store eggs without refrigeration, but they nevertheless require cool temperatures... a cellar, or perhaps a cave will do.

The first method is to coat the eggs with layers of lard, thus sealing the pores in the shell, keeping out oxygen and moisture. (I wonder if

anyone ever thought of coloring these greased eggs. Perhaps color coding by owner or age?) The other way is to store the eggs immersed in a solution of liquid sodium silicate (water glass). This accomplishes the same thing, but the chemistry knowledge may have been beyond the ancients. (Neither process is complicated, but care must be used, so anyone wanting to try them should find the detailed instructions, perhaps those put out by the USDA).

So, it was possible to keep fresh eggs over the winter in olden times; but I digress. The point is when the sun came back out, so did the fresh eggs, and they did not need special storage. You



could go ahead and use up the eggs that had been stored. A sign of spring,

just like that big sunny-side-up in the sky.

And let's think about free-range chickens a little... When they start laying, they hide their eggs EVERYWHERE, including in the grass. Egg hunt anyone?

The vernal equinox... but wait, what

provenance it needed to really take off.

This is not to say that the notoriously prolific rabbit has not always been associated with spring and rebirth. Being a fluffy white vegetarian prey animal also lends it an aura of innocence. And with that innocence and fluffiness also comes a playful sexuality.

He circles her, show off his equipment, and sometimes takes a whiz on her.

about that silly babbitt? Oestre was the Germanic goddess of springtime, the goddess of the rising sun. And she was the friend of all children. One day, to amuse a group of children, she turned her pet bird into a bunny. This babbitt laid colored eggs, which she gave to the children as gifts.

For some reason, very little was written about this myth before about 750 A.D. Then along came St. Bede, who mentioned the myth in connection with a book he was writing about Oestre-month (April). The scholarly monk provided this pagan legend with the

The common rabbit can be ready to breed as early as three months of age. The "bucks" and "does" start dating, and after a gestation period of only around 28 days, one to 14 "kits" can pop out. Momma babbitt can be ready to go again almost immediately after giving birth, but it should be noted that rabbits do vary in their fertility and desire to mate. It should also be noted that they have no problem mating with parents, siblings, or any other bunnies that may come along.

Seven is an average litter size for most female rabbits. If the "starter" female



reproduces at this rate, she will average about 92 kits per year. But she's not the only one reproducing by the end of the year; two rabbits can become well over 1,000 in just two years. And the thousand can become 50,000 in three, and... O-M-G!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(Of course, this assumes zero mortality from all causes. For an exponential calculation of rabbit reproduction, see [here](http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/scary.html)
<http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/scary.html>.)

So "f____ like bunnies" is not a joke, but it's possibly not much fun. Bunny sex itself is nothing to write home about. When a doe lets a buck know that she's ready to mate (possibly by prolonged eye contact, but prolly some other way), he circles her, shows off his equipment, and sometimes takes a whiz on her. After this exciting bout of foreplay, the dirty deed itself takes about 30 seconds. But they seem to

enjoy it. :-)

Getting back to how to explain the Easter Bunny connection... Same as Oestre...

Bunnies are funny
Bunnies = Candy (or colored eggs)
Kids love candy (and bunnies)....

Voila!

The candy is a relatively modern thing, though. Ancient treats were more spiritual in nature. Hot cross buns were among the earliest Easter treats. These were made by various European religious groups and distributed to the poor during Lent, and also eaten by everybody else as well. Pretzels were originally associated with Easter, the twists of the pretzel resembling arms folded in prayer. I don't know who started dipping them in white chocolate.

What are the most popular Easter candies today? Many would say Marshmallow Peeps in all their forms, and I





PLAYBOY

ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN



Editor's Note: Notice the similarity with the picture to the left.

would have to agree, providing they have been aged to their proper texture prior to consumption. Others would say chocolate rabbits (and 76 percent would eat the ears first). Others rank the top four as chocolate bunnies, followed by Peeps, jellybeans, and Cadbury eggs.

But, irrespective of candy type, I say the clear winner is the EGG in all its forms - Cadbury (Crème or Mini), Whoppers Robin Eggs, Snickers Eggs, jellybeans, Jelly Bellies, marshmallow chocolate covered eggs, Easter M&Ms, Reese's eggs, and plain chocolate eggs. I

mean, what else is there, save for the occasional chocolate rabbit or Jordan almond? Wait... those Jordan almonds are egg-shaped. So it's still the Easter Bunny and his colored eggs.

As we have established, bunnies are easy to come by, and many a child has found one in or near his/her Easter basket. A bunny can become a house rabbit. Once neutered, they can be box-trained and make fine companions. Umm... Getting a boy and girl and not neutering, BAD IDEA. Unless you plan a rabbit farm and have a customer for its output.

Now, Hosta, I'm not one of those people who keeps a house rabbit, but I do have cats. I've always thought of the cat as possibly nature's only creature that exists in both a miniaturized form and nearly identical giant form. This is a good thing, because what if there really WERE a giant Easter Bunny, and he really did hate you?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhzGSQwVa9I>

TC ~ Gudrun

• r — e — z •

I Know by Zy

I know

We are more than the sum of our parts

More than the pull of our hearts

More than the space we bend, trying to pretend

We're free

I know

We wallow in our fears we rage and burn with lightless certainty

Hoping that the shapes we leave in life are what we thought we'd be

The dull rains of experience wore down our ideals into a scared and scarred ideology

We talk though people and not to them

We work at problems and not through them

And trust in any being great or small that tells us that it's not at all

our job, our fault, our brother that needs keeping

and all the while the world we ignore goes on weeping

mony Guyot

I know

I am tired of hearing that everything that sings and builds and writes
our compassion ON this world is "a job killer", that "we shouldn't change the
horse in mid-stream", that "we need to study this more", that "it's not
the proper role" of anything to do anything. Too big to fail, too small to care
If we cannot find compassion in our lack of want.....then where?

And god damn it I know

We're short on smart and long on loud

We coat our empathy with proud and demonize the "in this all together" crowd

We spend good money to get face time with God, to find His will
and write it in the budget bill, we've shot too many people to be told
that we are wrong, we're not about to let a little truth and beauty spoil our song

The rich are "I've got mine, get yours" victims

The middle are "Not in my backyard" victims

But actual victims arestatistics

And budget cuts and line items and object lessons

They fade away, as cold and abstract as newsprint ink

'cause some things are too terrible to think

And Sweet Mother of Grasshoppers and Gun Shows

I know

We monetize humans, pump 'em out, get 'em on the spreadsheet

Where "I think therefore I am" and "Show me the money" meet

Hey, if we can't meet expectations on the street

Our stock gets sold, our brand gets old, we're forced to paint our garbage and call it gold

And corporations ARE "People", so at least we get to celebrate life.

Giant Money-filled creatures covered in Contracts, storming the village

Full of get-our-share-price-up pillage, creating value where once only worthfullness existed,

A robot, radio-controlled by the bunkered-down, hunkered-down swarm of shareholders,

Those elusive creatures that tell you that your livelihood was soooooo last quarter

We had toys like that as children, our games had lofty goals

But they didn't hurt anyone and neither filled our pockets nor emptied our souls.

And yeah, I know

That no one really cares how much words can kill, we get our fill

We cannot tell the difference between free speech and cheap speech

This freedom is beyond our reach

And god, we really love our "Free", free to hurt, free to maim

Free to buy away the blame, free to rig the rules of the game

Free to hide behind the lack of a name

Very real bullets burst of the barrels of bad ideas

And we say, it's just that way, the price we pay....

for something.

But I know

Somewhere, we have a soul, we have a flame, we have a spark that is better than we are
But we lock down and load up and hide that self away
Like fine china, so that life may not scratch or scar it
And we get on with what we do and when we're through
pretend that it's all we ever knew.

I know

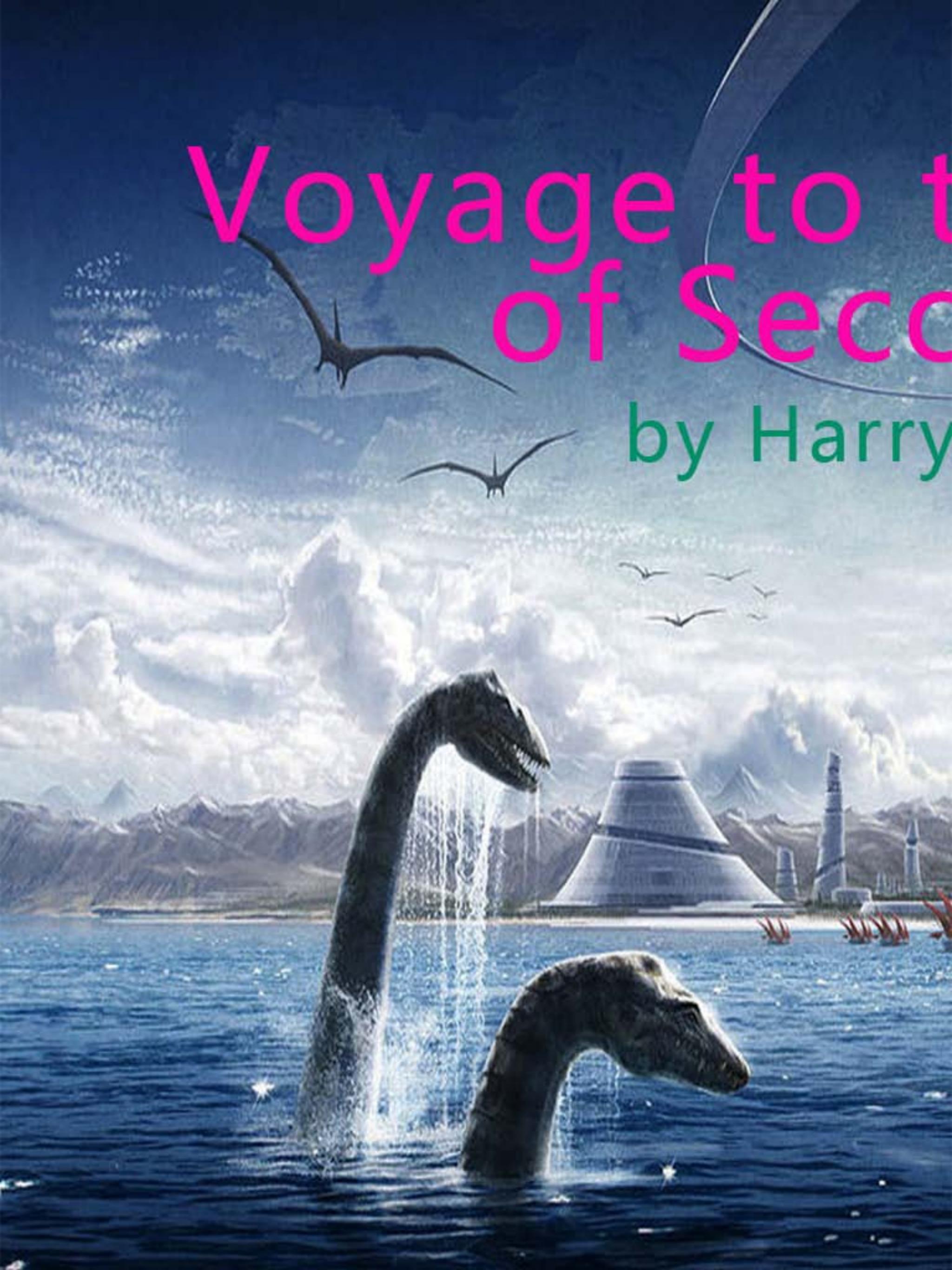
I KNOW

But after I close my door, turn off my light
face the things that fill the night
my mirror shows me far, far more than I really want to see
And it's not you, it's not they, it's not society
My anger comes from what I need to find in me

I know

Voyage to the Island of Secord

by Harry



the Center ond Life

✓ Bailey



This month I thought that after a long winter, it might be worthwhile to take an adventurous journey! Based on this late night vision, I began what I like to call the *Voyage to the Center of Second Life*. Much like the 1950s movie, this may be very much like that *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

I began my journey at the SL web site by creating a freshly minted avatar. A noob for the job! Should I choose male or female? Perhaps a female, since a woman in distress might get assistance more easily than a man looking lost and helpless?

OK. Female it is! Now, the girl-next-door redhead, or the all-about-business brunette wearing the black business suit? No, I think again. If one wants help, time to go with the blonde in the tight red sweater, of course.

Next choice is whether I want a paid account or a free account. Duh. This is for a rez column, and those editors are spendthrifts -- so no expense account for this noob babe. Freebie all the way!

I register my email to get my girl going and agree to the SL terms of service. Sounds easy enough, but wait. My spam software is not at all sure about this and puts it directly into my spam folder! A warning comes up. "Are you really sure you want to allow this?"

Hmmm... But all ahead full speed for the good of the rez readers. Sure. Go for it!

I land on the beach, and find myself directed to find my way off the beach as my first task. Huge green arrows point the way; how hard can this be?

Harder than one would think, apparently. I return after wandering across the first island and teleporting to the next site, only to get a notice that I need my SL software upgrade downloaded and installed. I decide to continue exploring, discovering other people (including several very rude comments from other new avatars) and re-learning to teleport and fly. Alas, I suddenly find myself slammed into the face of a cliff and I crash, with a total lock up of the software. I hate it when that happens.

Perhaps this journey is going to take a lot of patience and skill to survive? Wandering around, I encounter a seemingly safe and familiar site -- a dance club! I step on the floor and get a message telling me that Governor Linden wants to animate my avatar? I thought he already did that. Can't I walk, fly and teleport? But hey! What the heck. Go for it. I find myself dancing, with a menu of more break-dances than I can imagine, yet no music?

Walking out of the club, I score my first hidden treasure! A FREE t-shirt for Club SL. Zowie! Shopping is so easy here! Rounding a cliff on the beach, I discover a gate cut into the side, and I enter. I find myself in a castle with knights in shining armor, replete with a flaming fireplace. I don't think I'm in Kansas anymore, Dorothy! I sit at the grand piano at the front of the room and suddenly discover yet another new skill: I can play the Harpsichord! At least it sounds lovely.

latex and dark glasses. I believe that red "A" door is best left unopened at this point!

Perhaps for this journey we'd best begin in the wilderness. I find myself in the Portal Arena. I hear animal sounds off in the distance, but have arrived next to a crate sporting three liquor bottles opened on top. This place can't be all that bad, it seems. Turning around, I find a working bug-zapper installed. Now this is a girl's kind of wilderness!

...now I find myself joined by an avatar named Honey Candy wearing skin tight red latex and dark glasses.

Moving along, I walk up the cave-like path to the top of the cliff and make an almost otherworldly discovery. I seem to have wandered into an episode of Star Trek, the original series, with teleporter gauges surrounding me. What choices, too! Editors picks, Linden Realm, Glowing red "A" adult, Wilderness, Art, role-playing, popular, Social, and Music. So many choices, yet now I find myself joined by an avatar named Honey Candy wearing skin tight red

I see no other humans as I wander through the jungle, but I do find a nice quiet group of primates to sit and relax with. They tell me that they see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. I knew this place was safer than that adult portal! As I wonder, I appreciate the beauty of this created wilderness, and the peaceful way it captures my attention. There seems a great deal of potential in this Second Life, and yet I have no idea at all what I am doing most of

the time. Perhaps it is time to check my email and actually read the instructions?

Yes, it would appear that these days they email noobs with links to the instructions. I open the email, and amazingly discover paid advertising. Can you imagine! It directs me to several instructional videos. I click on the first one, something about fashion in SL, and discover I now have a paid commercial to watch. After the five minute trailer for some new RL movie, I find my video opening. Alas, it is entirely in French. While I do appreciate French fashion, I have to admit I am, like most Americans, monolingual.

Perhaps a few more videos? I work my way through several on shopping, getting Lindens, the benefits of home ownership, SL help, and my appearance. There seem to be many opportunities, yet they apparently ALL require the input of my credit information and some RL \$++. As we explained earlier, the rez budget provided no expense account for this reporter, so perhaps I may have to visit that "A"adult portal after all.

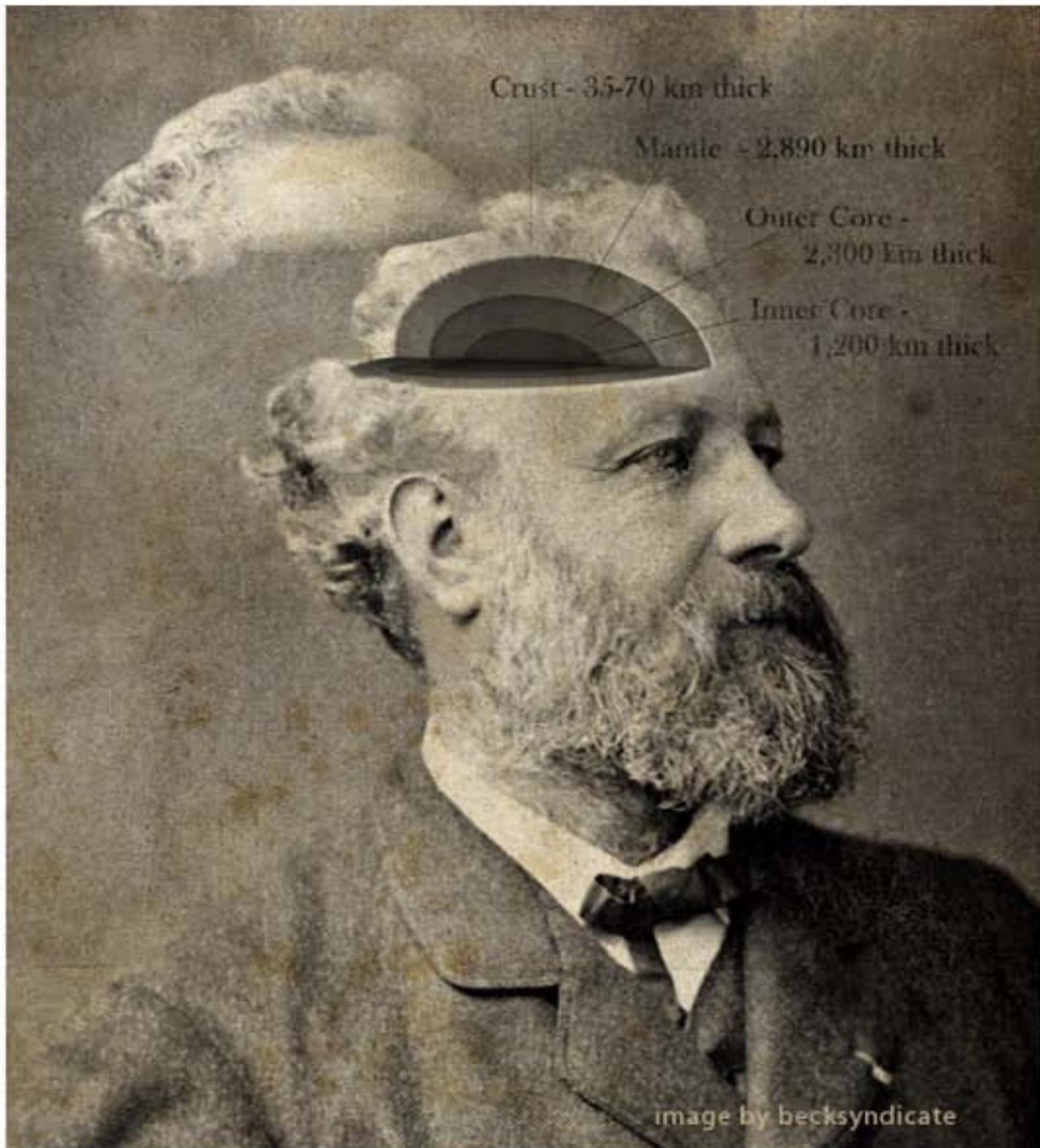
Not one to easily give up, I return in-world to the jungle and I'm just in the nick of time to catch a tour boat. When we arrive at the next stop, the driver gets off to return to RL and I wander back into the jungle for more explora-

tions. Lovely scenery, no people, but even the animals here have no personality. Time to revisit that social portal site and try a few more teleport options.

When I land back at the teleport on Social Island, I try the 'popular' option. Certainly there must be people there. Landing, I discover myself in the middle of shopping in all directions. Now, this is what I need, but what can you buy with zero Lindens? I wander the stores in search of free goodies and find nothing in that budget range. I do, however, run across a huge green flashing arrow pointing the way to "Dance Island." Now this is my sort of venue, as you all know. Besides, dancing, as far as I know, is still mostly free.

Following several arrows, I find my way onto the dance floor, where fairly good dance music is playing. For \$L100, I can even buy a tool to stop all animations once I get started dancing. I take a chance and hit the solo dance animator and discover a system that is menu driven and includes a stop menu choice. Whew! Alas, all the dance names are confusing, and mean nothing to our noob. Daniel? Steve? Jerzy? Are we selecting dance partners here or animations?

Now, remember at this point our noob has only received effective instruction in flying and teleporting. Menus across



three sides of the screen, but I have no idea what they do. Things like profile building, rebaking, appearance, select linked parts, and even camera controls don't help us much. And we still have not encountered a meaningful conversation, besides someone who wanted to pee on us in our first encounter, and someone who offered to lick our back-side in the most recent encounter.

I believe I am beginning to understand why there seems to be a lack of younger (newer) members around the venues I h

aunt in SL these days. But I am not giving up yet! Next month, I do promise to take this solid upstanding new member of the SL community out to find her some friends and some fun. I just hope she does not have to jump into that "A" portal with both feet to earn her financial way and her popularity! Keep your fingers crossed for her, and be aware she might just be that new member dancing beside you one of these days. To be continued.....

• r — e — z •

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